

WHO CONSUMES ILLEGAL WILDLIFE?
AN ANALYSIS OF BEAR BILE USAGE IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Vietnam is home to two species of bears: Asiatic Black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*). Both of these species are under serious threats, mainly from illegal hunting and trade. Bears are hunted from the wild and sold to farms to support the growing bear bile industry in Vietnam. There are currently about 4,000 captive bears in Vietnam, most of which originate from the wild; these bears are often kept in small iron cages and milked for bile on a regular basis. For this study, more than 3,000 of people from three major cities in Vietnam - Hanoi (north), Da Nang (central) and Ho Chi Minh (south) were surveyed to analyze the demographics and motivations of bear bile consumers. Results indicate that 22% of surveyed participants have used bear bile in the past. Hanoi (35%) has a much higher percentage of people using bear bile than both Da Nang (14%) and Ho Chi Minh City (16%). Both men and women consume bear bile, but the percentage of men (29%) using bear bile is much higher than women (17%). Most bear bile consumers (73%) use bear bile to cure specific health problems while only a small percentage (14%) of them use bear bile for entertainment purposes. Women mostly use bear bile to cure specific ailments (88%) while men use bear bile for many different purposes, including entertainment. Survey results indicate that bear bile consumption tends to rise as age increases, with purposes for usage also varying among age groups. During this survey, participants ranked medical alternatives to bear bile as the most effective method to reduce bear bile consumption and phase out bear farming operations in Vietnam.